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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the effects of spending variations among Missouri school districts on educational opportunity and quality. In an analysis of six matched pairs of Missouri school districts, each higher spending district was compared with a lower spending district of similar size. Data were derived from document analysis and interviews with the superintendent, school board chair, business manager, an elementary and a secondary principal, the teacher organization president, a parent leader, and a community leader in each district. Findings indicate that Missouri fails to provide equal educational opportunities to its public elementary and secondary students. Property-poorer districts provide inferior educational programs/services and facilities/equipment in comparison to their wealthier counterparts. Students in the city of St. Louis Public Schools do not have educational opportunities equal to those of children in other districts. The districts with access to greater resources from assessed valuation per pupil were superior in terms of teacher quality and salaries, programs and services, administration, facilities, community support, and financial choices. In summary, continued reliance on local revenue sources will fail to provide relief to students from lower socioeconomic areas. Two tables are included. (LMI)

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ED 362 955

SUMMARY[1] OF A REPORT ON MISSOURI PAIRED SCHOOL DISTRICT STUDY

IN THE CASE OF

BOARD OF EDUCATION OF THE CITY OF ST. LOUIS

v.

STATE OF MISSOURI, et al.

Dr. Van D. Mueller

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

MINNEAPOLIS

American Education Finance Association
MARCH 1993

[1](Based on report dated 7/2/92 Defendants' Exhibit #85)

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I. INTRODUCTION

The effects of spending variations in Missouri school districts were analyzed by conducting several case studies. The case studies examined detailed information from six pairs of school districts. This section includes an executive summary of the conclusions from the six cases and supplementary comparisons regarding the City of St. Louis Public Schools and selected other districts.

The information presented in this section is focused on the question: Do property wealth based spending disparities create disparities in educational opportunity? or in other words what differences in the scope and quality of educational opportunities result from differences in educational expenditures among Missouri Public Schools? Six matched pairs of school districts were purposefully selected for study. School district size and cost of purchasing educational goods and services were removed from consideration by selecting pairs to control for these two variables. Invitations to participate in this study were extended to over 30 Missouri school districts. Plaintiff and intervener districts in the current litigation were not included in the possible participating district pool. The 12 districts selected have cooperated fully in the collection of data for the case studies.

Comparative data on enrollment, expenditure, and tax levy for the 1989-90 fiscal year are set out in Table I. Each higher spending district was compared to a lower spending district in the same general size range. Higher spending Clayton was compared to lower spending Jennings; higher spending Center was compared with lower spending Excelsior Springs; higher spending Ferguson-Florissant was compared with lower spending Jefferson City; higher spending Camdenton was

Table I

St. Louis Public Schools
Missouri Paired District Study

Pairs By County/Location	School District	Eligible Pupils	Asessed Valuation Per E.P. $	Oper Tax Levy	Total Tax Levy	Current Expenditure Per E.P. $	Rank on Exp.
1. Suburban - St. Louis Area:							
St. Louis	Jennings	2,309	40,553	3.27	3.69	3,317	355
St. Louis	Clayton	1,752	219,977	2.27	2.38	8,336	6
2. Suburban - Kansas City Area:							
Jackson	Center 58	2,540	55,676	3.16	3.41	5,733	16
Clay	Excelsior Springs	2,837	29,524	2.52	3.19	3,636	225
3. Small City - East:							
St. Louis	Ferguson-Florissant	9,678	78,237	3.17	3.47	5,516	21
Cole	Jefferson City	7,133	54,517	2.48	2.53	3,468	291
4. Small City - West:							
Camden	Camdenton R-III	2,662	96,545	1.58	1.92	3,513	269
McDonald	McDonald County R-I	2,259	26,962	1.25	1.31	2,689	538
5. Rural - East:							
Knox	Knox County R-I	610	66,315	2.47	2.57	4,384	76
Monroe	Paris R-II	542	41,876	2.89	3.29	3,583	234
6. Rural - West:							
Stone	Reeds Spring R-IV	1,056	60,773	1.80	2.21	3,953	148
Christian	Ozark R-VI	2,080	24,928	1.50	2.17	2,847	521
7. St Louis City		41,336	52,607	3.70	3.70	6,373	12

Source: Missouri NEA

compared with lower spending McDonald County; higher spending Knox County was compared with lower spending Paris; and higher spending Reeds Spring was compared with lower spending Ozark. Some comparisons on selected variables were done with St. Louis Public Schools, Kansas City Public Schools, and several other urban school districts.

The data base for the case studies consisted of objective, quantifiable, and self-reported data from the comparison districts including school district reports and transcripts from structured interviews. Reports from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Missouri NEA were analyzed according to the selected district pairs. Interview schedules were developed and field tested to guide the collection of data from school administrators and non-administrators. The interview guides included six specific data areas: 1. teachers and teaching staff; 2. courses, programs, and support services; 3. facilities and equipment; 4. administration; 5. financial choices, trade-offs, and priorities; and 6. community support. In addition, the interviews and other data analysis were guided by two general research questions:

1. For what purposes and on what items are higher spending districts spending more? and

2. For what purposes and on what items are lower spending districts spending less?

Interviews were conducted during December 1991 and January 1992 during a day-long on-site visit in each of the 12 paired districts and the City of St. Louis Public Schools by a two-person interview team. The author of this report was the team leader for the data gathering on seven of the school district sites. The team leader for the remaining six school sites and the other team members were selected by and trained by the author of this report. The following individuals or their alternate were interviewed in each paired district grouping:

1. superintendent of schools; 2. school board chair; 3. business manager/clerk; 4. elementary and secondary principals (2); 5. teacher organization president(s); 6. parent leader; and 7. community leader. Each individual interview lasted from one to one-and-one-half hours. All interviews were taped and later transcribed. Informants were assured that confidentiality of their interviews would be maintained and no direct attribution would be included in published reports. The resulting data were analyzed and summarized for each pair of districts. The major question areas provided the structure for data reduction and analysis.

II. OVERVIEW (EXECUTIVE SUMMARY)

The findings of this paired district study support the conclusion that the State of Missouri does not provide equal educational opportunities to students attending free public school at both elementary school and secondary school levels in Missouri. Further, the property poorer district (including the City of St. Louis Public Schools) provide inferior educational programs and services in comparison to property wealthier school districts and educational facilities and equipment in poorer districts also tend to be inferior and not adequate to support modern education programs. Finally, the educational opportunities available to the children and youth in the City of St. Louis Public Schools are not equal to those of children and youth attending in other school districts even though the needs of the student population are substantially greater in many respects in St. Louis. In order to respond to the needs of students in the St. Louis City Public Schools, the Board of Education must spend more money per pupil to provide educational opportunity to St. Louis City students which are equal to the educational opportunities provided to students residing in property wealthy districts in the state. Even though the St. Louis Public School District spends

$6373 per eligible pupil the funding level is not sufficient to enable the school district to address the needs of its students. The resource inequities are even greater when spending for desegregation and special education are taken into account. These program costs are included in the $6373 per eligible pupil spending level for the St. Louis City School District. For St. Louis County suburban school districts special education costs are largely assumed by the St. Louis County Special District and desegregation expenses are state funded. Significant cost differences are also attributable to the several municipal overburden factors which impact urban school districts in general and the City of St. Louis Public Schools in this instance.

The Jennings/Clayton comparison is illustrative of the underlying disparities. The summary analysis in Table II-A and B demonstrates very clearly that the Clayton schools have more favorable conditions in all of the six areas. Clayton has an extraordinary professional development program. It is one of the district's highest funding priorities and yields a highly individualized program where each staff member works on a growth plan. To support this program a wide range of activities are provided including paid travel, sabbatical leaves, discretionary supply and materials budgets for teachers, incentives and rewards for outstanding performance, stipends for advanced degrees and extensive planned inservice programs, e.g. nine days per year. In contrast Jennings professional staff have access to a very minimal professional development program. Travel costs are reimbursed at minimal level and professional travel is discouraged. There is no discretionary supply and expense budget for teachers. The singular incentive for advanced training provides a $35 per credit hour stipend. The district inservice is minimal and averages a day per year.

In Clayton the high school students have access to an eight period instructional day which provides a rich and rigorous college preparatory program.

TABLE II
A
MISSOURI PAIRED STUDY
SUMMARY MATRIX

	Paris/Knox County		Jefferson City	Ferguson/ Florissant	Jennings/Clayton	
Teachers/Teaching						
ability to attract	-	+	-	+	-	+
vacancies	-	+	d-	d+	-	+
hire experience	-	+	-	+	-	+
other factors	d	d	-	+	-	+
higher salary (+=improve quality)	d-	d+	d	d	-	+
professional devel	-	+	-	+	--	++
salary/exper	d	d	-	+	-	+
Courses, Programs						
elementary	--	++	-	+	-	+
secondary	-	+	-	+	--	++
instruct material	-	+	-	+	-	+
services (at risk)	-	+	-	+	-	+
Administration						
level of support	-	+	-	+	-	+
accreditation	-	+	-	+	-	+
salary/exper	d-	d+	-	+	-	+
Facilities						
elementary	-	+	-	+	-	+
secondary	-	+	--	++	--	++
Community Support						
support	-	+	d-	d+	-	+
tax rate perception	-	+	-	+	-	+
Financial Choices						
more funding (+=buy extras)	-	+	-	+	-	+
less funding (+=less impact)	-	+	-	+	-	+
Summary Rating	-	+	-	+	-	+
Financial Analysis						
total tax rate (+=lower rate)	-	+	-	+	-	+
exp/pupil	-	+	-	+	-	+
assessed val/pupil	--	++	-	+	--	++

Note:
+ means more favorable level when comparing the two school districts.
++ indicates a substantially favorable level.
- means less favorable level when comparing the two school districts.
-- indicates a substantially less favorable level.
d means it was draw, no significant difference.
d-, d+ indicates no major difference, but provides a direction of more favorable (d+), or less favorable (d-).

TABLE II
B
MISSOURI PAIRED STUDY
SUMMARY MATRIX

	McDonald/Camdenton		Ozark/Reeds Spring		Excelsior Springs/Center	
Teachers/Teaching						
ability to attract	-	+	-	+	--	++
vacancies	d-	d+	-	+	-	+
hire experience	-	+	d	d	-	+
other factors	-	+	-	+	--	++
higher salary (+=improve quality)	d-	d+	d	d	--	++
professional devel	-	+	-	+	-	+
salary/exper	d+	d-	-	+	-	+
Courses, Programs						
elementary	--	++	--	++	-	+
secondary	--	++	-	+	--	++
instruct material	-	+	-	+	-	+
services (at risk)	-	+	-	+	--	++
Administration						
level of support	-	+	--	++	--	++
accreditation	-	+	+	-	-	+
salary/exper	d-	d+	d+	d-	--	++
Facilities						
elementary	-	+	-	+	-	+
secondary	-	+	-	+	-	+
Community Support						
support	d-	d+	+	-	-	+
tax rate perception	-	+	d	d	-	+
Financial Choices						
more funding (+=buy extras)	-	+	-	+	-	+
less funding (+=less impact)	-	+	--	++	--	++
Summary Rating	-	+	-	+	--	++
Financial Analysis						
total tax rate (+=lower rate)	+	-	+	-	+	-
exp/pupil	-	+	-	+	--	++
assessed val/pupil	--	++	--	++	--	++

Note:
+ means more favorable level when comparing the two school districts.
++ indicates a substantially favorable level.
- means less favorable level when comparing the two school districts.
-- indicates a substantially less favorable level.
d means it was draw, no significant difference.
d-, d+ indicates no major difference, but provides a direction of more favorable (d+), or less favorable (d-).

An extensive advanced placement program is offered to students and an International Baccalaureate program is being considered. Multiple foreign languages (4) are offered through fifth or sixth years and a range of advanced mathematics and science courses are taught. English teachers teach only three classes daily (approximately 65 students) and conference twice a week individually with each of their students coaching their writing. Classes at Clayton High School average 10-15 students. Students at Jennings High School have access to two years of Spanish language instruction. No advanced mathematics is available to students and no advanced placement courses are offered. Writing courses are weak because class sizes are too large for teachers to grade all the papers. Science is limited to the standard biology, chemistry, and physics. Science labs are adequate but insufficient by supplied. Class sizes generally range from 25-28 with some above 30 students. Six teachers are currently teaching in areas where they are not fully certificated. The Jennings High School facility is plain and dull. Library and special purpose facilities are only minimally adequate. The school site is small and further expansion would be difficult. Clayton High School is located in an attractive campus setting including a three-story brick classroom building, a fitness center with indoor tennis, basketball, wrestling room, and six-lane olympic-sized pool, and separate industrial arts and home economics buildings. There are three elaborate computer labs and an outstanding library with over 30,000 volumes and a staff of seven.

The Clayton schools spend $8336 per eligible pupil for educational programs and services. This buys $5019 per pupil more than in Jennings or a total of $100,380 more programs and services and personnel for a classroom of 20 pupils. Clayton has 5-1/2 time the assessed valuation of Jennings. Jennings does lead Clayton in one category—its tax rate is 3.69 v. 2.38 in Clayton. The citizens and students in Jennings are paying more for less education. The young people

attending the Clayton schools are the recipients of a superb education at a tax rate 35 percent less than that paid in the Jennings district.

Similarly, the wealth and spending disparity between Knox County and Paris gives Knox County an advantage in the educational opportunities it is able to provide its children and youth. Table I presents data which shows that the property wealth per pupil is almost 60 percent greater in Knox County than in Paris. This difference is magnified by the fact that educational services are typically provided in a classroom setting: For example, an $800 per pupil expenditure difference presents a $20,000 disparity in a classroom of 25 students. This difference in access to resources is illustrated by the summary data in Table II-A. The Knox County schools are able to provide superior educational programs and services in each of the six data categories. The most significant differences are present in the areas of elementary and secondary courses and programs. Knox County high school students have access to more extensive programming in foreign languages, mathematics, science, language arts, social studies, and vocational education than do their counter parts who attend high school in Paris. The library is not adequate at Paris High School and difficulties with teacher certification persist in some instructional areas. Elementary school students in Knox County are educated in a modern, well-equipped building. A full-time librarian, reading specialist, gifted education specialist, and part-time nurse are available in addition to specialists in art, music, and physical education. In Paris, the elementary facility has been converted from an open-spaced school and is staffed with a part-time librarian and specialist in art and music who are shared with the middle-school. One librarian serves the entire school district. The curricular program is basic and does not include a gifted program or program for slow learners. Finally the average elementary class sizes in Paris are considerably larger than in Knox County. The tax payers in Paris are paying more for less

education. Their tax rate is 3.29 compared with 2.57 for Knox County, a difference of 28 percent.

Wealthy Ferguson-Florissant School District has substantially more education funds per pupil than the Jefferson City School District. Table I shows the difference in current expenditure per pupil to be $2097. This represents an advantage of almost 60 percent for Ferguson-Florissant and provides an additional $52,000 for a classroom of 25 students. As a result, the educational opportunities available to students in Jefferson City are inferior to those available in Ferguson-Florissant. Table II-A provides a summary analysis which show that Ferguson-Florissant has an advantage in each of the six areas studied. This is particularly notable in the area of secondary school facilities. The Jefferson High School facility was built to house 1400-1700 students and now serves over 2300 students. As a consequence the school program is limited by overcrowding, insufficient student parking, limited library holdings and equipment, and the lack of a swimming pool anywhere in district buildings. In the Ferguson-Florissant district, McClure North High School was built to serve 2400 and now has 1200 students, resulting in a wealth of flexible space. The library/media center is outstanding and the district has several swimming pools. Another significant advantage to Ferguson-Florissant is the outstanding staff development program. The district maintains a separate staff development facility and an extensive planned professional development program. In Jefferson City no sabbatical leave plan exists and only recently a director of staff and curriculum development was hired. Another area where the Jefferson City students are provided with fewer services and programs is the general area of technology, particularly access to computers in labs or in the classroom. This deficiency is particularly noticeable at the elementary school level. At the junior high school and/or middle school level the lack of adequate modern facilities has constrained the program in

Jefferson City. A recent successful bond issue may alleviate this crowding but without access to operating funding program improvements would still be delayed. Substantial disparities also exist in administrator and teacher salaries with average teacher salaries running almost 1/3 higher in Ferguson-Florissant while administrators make almost 30 percent more than their counter parts in Jefferson City. The average annual salary differences of $8,000-$10,000 per classroom teacher also translate into large differences in career earnings and in retirement benefits. The staff salaries in Ferguson-Florissant schools provide a more competitive advantage in recruitment and maintenance of high quality teachers and administrators.

Table I illustrates the considerable disparities in wealth and spending between the McDonald County and Camdenton School Districts. Property wealth per pupil in McDonald County is only 28 percent of the property wealth per pupil in Camdenton. The current expenditure per pupil is $824 greater in Camdenton which results in a difference of over $20,000 for a classroom of 25 students. The reported differences in programs, services and aspirations are summarized in Table II-B. The differences in access to resources have clearly placed the McDonald County students at a disadvantage in access to educational programs and services in each of the six descriptive areas. Staff salaries in Camdenton average 14 percent to 16 percent more per year for comparable positions than in McDonald County. Elementary students and teachers in Camdenton have access to instruction from specialists in art, music, physical education, library, and health services which are substantially less in McDonald County. Investment in professional development in the McDonald County schools is seriously constrained by lack of funds, thus few opportunities for growth are made available. At the high school level students in Camdenton attend a school accredited by the North Central Association, one which offers 144.75 approved

high school credits as contrasted to 116 approved credits at the McDonald County high school. The curriculum in foreign languages, mathematics, and science is clearly superior in Camdenton. Additional advantages to students attending Camdenton schools come in the area of access to computers, up-to-date textbooks, and general supplies and materials to support instruction. The Camdenton schools have an advantage over the McDonald County in administrative staffing as well. Major differences exist between the two comparison districts in the adequacy of the school facilities. The school buildings in McDonald County are generally old and are in need of substantial upgrading in order to support a modern educational program. On the other hand the students in Camdenton attend school in buildings that range in quality from above average to excellent, buildings that are well-equipped and well maintained and which do provide the needed support for a 1990s educational program. The taxpayers in both districts are troubled by the level of taxes. In Camdenton three successive school levies have failed and in McDonald County even the rate of $1.25 is perceived as too high. The citizens in McDonald County are paying a rate almost 50 percent less on a tax base that is less that one-third of Camdenton. The differences in educational programs and services reflect these disparities in resource availability.

The Ozark and Reeds Spring School Districts vary substantially in access to educational resources. The property wealth per pupil (Table I) in Reeds Spring is nearly two-and-a-half times the property wealth per pupil in Ozark. The current expenditure per eligible pupil in Reeds Spring is $1106 greater. This translates into over $27,000 additional funding for a classroom of 25 students. The total tax levy in the two districts is almost identical, $2,21 for Reeds Spring and $2.17 for Ozark. Table II-B provides a clear picture of the differences in programs, services, and educational opportunities afforded the students of the two comparison districts. The staff/pupil ratio in Reeds Spring is 35 percent greater than in Ozark.

This is reflected in the availability of specialists in the elementary schools in Reeds Spring and the absence of supportive staff in Ozark. The high school program in Reeds Spring contains more approved units of high school credit. This is reflected in the richness of the curriculum in areas of mathematics, foreign languages, science, and language arts. The Reeds Spring schools also have several more provisions for dealing with at-risk students than do the schools in Ozark. The availability of administrative and supervisory staff is greater in the Reeds Spring districts. If Ozark were to staff administratively at a level comparable to Reeds Spring they would need to hire five additional administrators. The school facilities in both districts are well-maintained and handicapped accessible with no portable classrooms or non-classroom space being used for instruction. The citizens in Reeds Spring voted down the last tax levy request in 1991. The only approved levies in Ozark have been for capital improvements. Property taxes are not popular in either school district. Reeds Spring has been able to maintain fund balances of about 15 percent as compared with about 5 percent in Ozark. Both districts described any reductions in resources as inflicting serious damage to educational programs. Overall the educational opportunities afforded to the students in Ozark are constrained by lack of property tax resources while nearby Reeds Spring with a considerable advantage in property wealth is able to offer a superior education with only a comparable tax effort.

Center School District has almost twice the assessed property valuation of Excelsior Springs School District and spends $2097 more per eligible pupil (57 percent) to purchase educational goods and services. This spending difference amounts to over $50,000 for a classroom of 25 students. The citizens of Center District accomplish this with an effort (tax rate)only 7 percent greater than the rate in Excelsior Springs. Table I provides the summary details on the Center-

Excelsior Springs comparison as well as the other paired districts. The educational opportunities afforded the students in the Center district are superior to those available to the students in Excelsior Springs. Table II-B shows that Center district has the advantage in each of the six data categories. The differences are most dramatic in the area of investments in personnel, program, and facilities. Center school teachers are paid according to the best salary schedule in the Kansas City Metropolitan Area. Average teacher salaries range from 19 percent better (for high school teachers) to 42 percent better (for elementary teachers) than average teacher salaries in Excelsior Springs. The actual average salary differences range from $6000 to $11,000 per year. Over a 25 year teaching career these differences would be several hundred thousand dollars and would also impact the level of retirement income. Staffing levels are also better in Center schools. The Excelsior Springs district would need to hire 24 additional teachers to be able to match the same teacher/eligible pupil ratio as Center school now has. This would require close to one-half million dollars in new revenue, a very unlikely occurrence for Excelsior Springs. The professional development program and supplies and materials budgets are distinctly better in the Center district. At the elementary school level the students attending Center district will have much better programming if they are either gifted or at-risk. At the high school level the courses and programs available at the Center district high school amount to 143 approved credits as compared with 115 at Excelsior Springs. The Center high school curriculum provides depth and variation and is characterized by a wealth of opportunities for advanced placement courses, choices in foreign languages, access to an alternative high school and to vocational education at an area-wide vocational school. The high school program in Excelsior Springs is not accredited as is the Center district high school and provides a vary basic program, lacking in technology emphasis and in adequate supplies and materials. The

instructional program in Excelsior Springs is textbook based and lacks experiential components in labs, field trips, or manipulatives. Textbooks are out-of-date in a number of areas. The Excelsior Springs district would need to increase its administrative and supervisory staff by 44 percent to achieve parity with Center. Average principals' salaries in Center district are 20 percent higher than in Excelsior Springs. Other administrator salaries are also considerably higher in Center. The differences in the school buildings and facilities between the two districts are considerable. The students in Center district attend schools that have been upgraded and support a modern educational program. The students in Excelsior Springs attend schools that are old, not very pleasant aesthetically, and are not a conducive environment for a quality educational program. The citizens in Excelsior Springs voted down two tax levy increase proposals in 1991 (only 44 percent supported the November 1991 levy). On the other hand the residents of the Center school community have supported their schools with their money as well as their encouragement to adapt the school experience to meet the changing needs of young people. While any new resources available to the Excelsior Springs district would necessarily go to catching up on salary levels and basic programs, the new resources would allow the Center schools to expand the use of technology, computers, and robotics, undertake an artificial intelligence program, and to redesign instructional programs to provide much more hands-on experience. The students attending the Center schools have a much more varied educational experience than do the students at Excelsior Springs.

The comparative data which follow in Section IV are organized and presented in six areas; teachers and teaching; courses, programs, and support services; facilities and equipment; administration; financial choices, priorities, and trade-offs; and community support. For each of these areas data are analyzed according to the matched pairs: Jennings/Clayton, Excelsior Springs/Center,

Jefferson City/Ferguson-Florissant, McDonald County/Camdenton, Paris/Knox County, and Ozark/Reeds Spring. These comparisons provide an abundance of corroborating evidence to support a conclusion of educational privilege for some Missouri children and youth and educational disadvantage for others. The advantage is clearly held by those school districts that have access to greater property wealth and hence are able to purchase greater quantity and quality of education goods and services.

III. FINAL COMMENTS

This section provides summary conclusions of the analysis and findings provided in the previous two sections. The comments are presented according to the six areas which provided the framework for the analysis of the effects of spending on the presence or absence of educational programs and services.

A. Teachers and Teaching

The school districts with the access to greater resources from assessed valuation per pupil paid their staff more, had a richer staff/pupil ratio, invested in extensive staff development programs and opportunities, had less staff turnover, and were able to attract staff with better credentials and experience.

B. Courses, Programs, and Services

The school districts with access to greater resources from assessed valuation per pupil were able to provide more courses and services, smaller class sizes, more specialists to supplement the classroom teacher, more experiences for the more able students; e.g. advanced placement, a greater variety of course options, better and more up-to-date textbooks, better libraries, more instructional supplies and materials, more numerous specialized services, and more programs the students at-risk.

C. Administration

The school districts with access to greater resources from assessed valuation per pupil provided more specialized district-level administrative support, full-time principals in each building and additional supervisory personnel in both instructional and non-instructional areas. Schools with higher spending levels were more likely to be accredited by the North Central Association and to be actively pursuing the Missouri School Improvement Plan.

D. Facilities

The school districts with access to greater resources from assessed valuation per pupil are able to fund the higher operating costs and are also able to provide for better-maintained, newer or newly retro-fitted facilities and equipment. The facilities in the property-wealthy districts could support modern educational programming and provide learning environments which enhanced student and staff achievement.

E. Community Support

The general feeling in all districts was that taxes were high enough or too high. The differences in community support in providing the locally funded resource base tended to favor the "have" districts. The current system of voter approved local tax levies places the quality of a student's educational experience on the will or where-with-all of his/her parents and neighbors rather than the will or resources of the State of Missouri. The particular educational needs of individual children do not tend to be a significant factor in the presence or absence of programs and services.

F. Financial Choices, Priorities, and Tradeoffs

The school districts with access to greater resources from assessed valuation per pupil are already offering programs and services well beyond the basics. Therefore, if any fiscal difficulties occur they are able to respond with solutions

less hurtful to students. On the other hand, the districts that are struggling to maintain their State accreditation or minimum programming have little if any flexibility to make additional reductions. The districts with greater resources can readily add new services, expand technology, or program for diverse student needs if new resources are available, because they do not worry about fundamental program survival matters. The poorer districts are compelled to use any new resources to try to catch-up with their neighbors in offering more basic education services. The availability of greater resources clearly leads to greater flexibility and choice. Other inequities in the current Missouri school finance system are reflected in the fact that some school districts have the capacity to fund special education services through special districts while other districts such as the City of St. Louis Schools must use current available resources. The funding of desegregation and lack of recognition of other education and municipal overburdens also add to the injustice of the current Missouri system.

In sum, presence or absence of resources does impact educational programs and services. These differences can be readily observed and are known by educator and lay person alike even though an acknowledgement and discussion of these differences and their impact on children and youth is difficult and embarrassing to all. Further, it is evident that examples abound of districts where the community environment creates additional challenges and costs for the school districts; e..g. St. Louis Public Schools serve a disproportionate number of young people from lower socio-economic conditions as does the Jennings School District. The irony is that there appears to be a pattern of resource scarcity accompanied by greater student demand/need for services for some districts and resource affluence accompanied by students with fewer demands/needs for educational services for other districts. The continued reliance on local revenue sources will contributed little to this unfortunate condition and will do little to

provide any relief for the students whose chances and opportunities for life success are being constrained through no fault of their own.

The disparity in access to educational programs and services described in this report impact all children and youth in Missouri where the school district characteristics of enrollment size, expenditure per pupil, taxable valuation per pupil, and cost of purchase of services are comparable to those studied here.